

Date: April 26, 1974

Place: Evanston Historical Society

Interview with: Mrs. Margaret Harper

Observations: The interview was not pre-arranged. During conversations with the staff, it came out that Mrs. Harper was a graduate of ETHS, class of 1922. She protested, however, that she could not possibly be of help. The purpose of the interview was to once again test the hypothesis that school was elitist, as was the principal.

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Q. Mrs. Harper, is it true that you were a student in the high school while Mr. Beardsley was the principal?

A. Yes, but I don't think that I can help you. I really remember very little about the school.

Q. But my questions really aren't so very specific. Would you mind answering just a few questions?

A. I really don't think I can help you. I did very little at school. I went, and usually returned home right afterwards.

Q. Perhaps you can answer one question on Mr. Beardsley. I'm trying to find out what kind of man he was.

A. I had very little contact with him, but everybody used to say that he was a fine man. I can't say anything more about him. And I won't be able to provide much information.

Q. Mrs. Harper, really, you're being helpful, and I'm sure that you can be. Without making a big fuss about it -- that is, without my getting in the way, would you mind if I just noted a few things while we talk about this?

A. I think that you'd be much more successful speaking to my husband. I think he's home now. He's spent most of his life in Evanston and graduated from the high school six years before I did.

Q. Do you think that I could visit him now?

A. You could. We live at 2115 Sherman. If you go over and ring, he should be there. If he's not, go around back because he's putting up the screens.

(A second staff member jokingly offered encouragement to Mrs. Harper.)

Q. I'd like to thank you for the address, but before I leave..

A. I don't know...

Q. But you have been helpful. Now what I don't understand about Evanston is this. The newspaper clippings I just read said that on one hand the city has such good schools, and on the other, that another bond issue was defeated. If the people liked the schools, why did they defeat the issues?

A. Liking the schools is one thing. When it means paying higher taxes, then it's a different question. Now I don't know what else I can do.

Q. Well, I'll head on over to speak with your husband. But I'm going to ask him about extra-curricular activities at the school. Do you know if there were any?

A. There were some, but I wasn't at all involved in them.

Q. Were your friends? (quickly inserted)

A. I don't know; I had few friends at the school.





- A. I did very little there, so I don't think I can help.
- Q. You really are being helpful. But now I have another question on one of the clippings. This one here (presented) discusses the consolidation vote between school districts 74 and 75.
- A. Yes, when was that? 1915. They wanted to consolidate the lower schools.
- Q. The two districts are labeled North and South. Where was the dividing line?
- A. South, 75 I think, began at Dempster Street, I think. Perhaps even higher. But the North was all of North Evanston.
- Q. According to this, the North voted overwhelmingly against consolidation. Do you have any idea why?
- A. It probably had to do with higher taxes. And I think that it would have unified the school boards, too.
- Q. Would it have affected the high school?
- A. No, that was something else.
- Q. In this booklet (also presented to the interviewee) it says that in 1896 The school had both clubs and sports. Was...
- A. Well, I don't know. If it says that they had them, then I guess that they did. I was never a part of them; but if you ask my husband, maybe he can help you. I surely can't.
- Q. O.K., just one more question. And you really have been very helpful. I spoke with a gentleman this morning who told me that Mr. Beardsley married...
- A. Yes, he married the shorthand teacher. Rutheta Hunt. She was a fine woman. She taught me typing. (laughter)
- Q. Did you have any other commercial courses at the school?
- A. I don't think so. Yes, she also taught shorthand. That was not my area, though, so I don't know anything about it.
- Q. Did Mr. Dawes (former owner of Dawes Estate, currently the home of the Evanston Historical Society) attend the high school.
- A. That I don't know. (A second staff member volunteered a no.)
- Q. Do you know if any of the Sheriden Road people, or the people who lived along the lake sent their children to ETHS?
- A. I don't know; I never was interested in that. But there were two private schools in the area. One was run by Northwestern and was called Northwestern Academy. The other was in North Evanston. I don't know any one who went to either.
- Q. Mrs. Harper,...
- A. I really have little time and I don't know what else I can do.
- Q. Did you grow up in Evanston?
- A. Yes
- Q. Well, did you know many of your classmates?
- A. I knew some, but I don't know where they are now. I really know very little about the school.
- Q. One last question. I promise. Did your parents ever talk





about the school, did they ever express their feelings about it?

A. No, but I'm sure that they thought it important that I attend. They were very stern about that. And I really don't want to talk about it anymore.

Q. O.K. I'd like to thank you for helping me.

A. I really wasn't very helpful.

Q. But you were. Now do you think that I could call your husband from here to inform him of my coming?

A. Yes. I could do that. What did you say that your name was?

Q. Robert Handloff. (She placed the call.) Now when did your husband attend the school?

A. Six years before I did. That was...1912 to 1916.

Q. And Mr. Beardsley was there, too?

A. I don't know; you'll have to ask him.

Q. Do you know of any other people in Evanston to whom I might speak concerning the schools?

A. No, I don't.

Q. Mrs. Harper, I really do want to thank you for all the help you did give me. I mean that.

A. I'm sure I didn't give you much.

Q. Listen, you explained the consolidation vote to me, and indicated that some of the wealthier parents sent their children to the private schools. That was important to know.

A. I'm not so sure about that. I think that there were some children of reasonably wealthy people at the high school.

Q. See, you've just given me another bit of information.

A. Well, that's all I'll be able to do.

Q. Fine. Again, thank you. Oh, did Mr. Beardsley have any children?

A. That I can't say. No, he didn't (prompted by a colleague)

Q. O.K. Thank you. Could I have your full name?

A. Margaret Harper, and you have the address.

Q. Do you think that we could arrange another meeting?

A. I've told you all that I know.

Q. O.K. Thanks.

A. Hurry on over because Mr. Harper will be waiting.



